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The Happiest Xenophobes on Earth: Examining Anti-Immigrant Sentiments in the Nordic Countries

Maggie Zeisset

Illinois Wesleyan University, mzeisset@iwu.edu

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The Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland) are widely known as progressive, open and tolerant. However, in recent years these countries have witnessed growing intolerance towards immigrants, particularly Muslims. This intolerance is manifested in violent attacks against foreigners and the rise of far right, exclusionary populist parties. This paper seeks to understand what causes some citizens in these Nordic countries to embrace anti-immigrant xenophobic attitudes and other citizens to, not only reject, but to fight such views.

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INTRODUCTION

For most, the Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland) epitomize liberalism and tolerance. All of the Nordic countries rank in the top ten of the happiest countries in the world, with Norway placed at the top; and are all known as leaders in healthcare, education and eco-friendly innovations. The Nordic group also contains some of the richest countries in the world. Partially due to oil revenues, all five ranked in the top thirty-highest gross domestic product per capita countries in 2015. On the surface, at least, the Nordic countries appear to be open societies with progressive social norms, happy citizens, generous welfare states, and strong social solidarity. Upon closer observation, however, the picture becomes more complicated, particularly when it comes to anti-immigrant xenophobia.

Up “until 2001, Norway, Sweden and Denmark could be seen as a fairly liberal bastion in the north of Europe," Rune Berglund Steen, the director of the Norwegian Center against Racism, told the Washington Post (Noack 2015). Recently, however, there have been signs that the Nordic countries are losing their reputation for tolerance. This can be seen from the rise of Radical Right Parties (RRPs), which espouse nativist and xenophobic rhetoric and policies. In June the anti-immigration Danish People’s Party emerged from the elections as the second-largest political party with 21% of the votes, compared to their 12% vote in the prior election (Eddy 2015). The Swedish elections in September 2014 produced similar results with the far right Sweden Democrats becoming the third-largest party, more than doubling their performance from four years earlier (Shapiro 2015). In April 2014, the nationalist-oriented Finns Party emerged as the second-largest party and in Norway, the far right Progress Party teamed up with the

Conservatives to win the election in 2013, entering government for the first time (Paterson 2013).

Further, for countries with generally low crime rates, there has been a pronounced multicultural backlash marked by an uptick in the violence surrounding immigrants. Between December and February of 2015 alone, two major attacks happened in Sweden. On January 1st a mosque was firebombed, making it the third one bombed in Sweden since Christmas. The mosques were tagged with swastikas as well (Shapiro 2015). Then, in Denmark on February 14, two shootings took place in Copenhagen within hours of each other, killing two and wounding five. The assailant was a Muslim Danish citizen with ties to Islamic extremists (Gargiulo, Botelho, and Almasy 2015). Denmark's response has been to drastically cut refugees' rights and benefits and discourage asylum seekers.

Elsewhere, too, the Syrian migrant crisis appears to be intensifying hostile attitudes and policies toward outsiders. Norway, the richest of the Nordic countries, has threatened to charge anyone who tries to help refugees enter the country from the Arctic Circle with human trafficking (Noack 2015). Finland's government has also shown a reluctance to accept more refugees; and though the governments of Sweden and Iceland have been more welcoming of migrants and refugees in this current crisis, it is clear that even Sweden is becoming reluctant to take on more migration (Noack 2015).

The evidence is all around: xenophobia is on the rise, even in the Nordic states, but not all citizens agree with each other or with their governments regarding immigration. The question, then, is what causes some individuals to adopt anti-immigrant xenophobic attitudes while others, who have experienced relatively the same political context and country demographics, remain more tolerant? This is an important question, because anti-immigrant xenophobic attitudes have been identified as key drivers of RRP support (Rydgren 2003; van der Brug et al. 2000, 2003, 2009; Hjerm and Bohman 2014). RRPs create anti-immigrant legislation and increase xenophobic (particularly anti-Muslim immigrant) rhetoric (Hjerm and Bohman 2014). Understanding what drives anti-immigrant xenophobic attitudes would be a first step in preventing RRPs from gaining more power and perpetuating negative frames around immigrants and immigration (Hjerm and Bohman 2014). It would also be a start in preventing anti-immigrant and

anti-migrant violence. The literature provides three broad approaches to explaining political intolerance and anti-immigrant xenophobia in particular: social group characteristics, sense of threat, and cultural attitudes/ideology.

SOCIAL GROUP CHARACTERISTIC

Religiosity

The idea that religion is a determinant of racist or xenophobic attitudes has been strongly researched within the psychology of religion literature, but there is some disagreement about the nature of that relationship. Scholars have argued that intrinsically religious people internalize religious values related to "humility, compassion and love of neighbor" (Allport and Ross 1967, 441) and are therefore tolerant in their views towards others, including outsiders. Those who are more extrinsically religious tend to be more "utilitarian and more dogmatic in their social attitudes as well as their religion" (Ekici and Yucel 2014, 108), and therefore are more prejudiced against others, particularly those they view as Other (Park et al. 1990; Rowatt and Kirkpatrick 2002; Salsman et al. 2005). Research has also found that religious particularism, that is "to what extent people believe there is only one true religion" (Ekici and Yucel 2014, 108) will increase prejudice, while doctrinal beliefs (subscribing to religious beliefs) decrease prejudice (Ekici and Yucel 2014; Eisinga et al. 1995; Konig et al. 2000; Glock and Stark 1966; Scheepers et al. 2002b). Individual spirituality should decrease prejudice (Hood et al. 1996; Scheepers et al. 2002b; Ekici and Yucel 2014). Hjerm and Bohman argue that non-religious people are on average more likely to oppose immigration than strongly religious people (2014). They also argue that religious people in Protestant countries and in countries with a low proportion of majority adherents are more tolerant than religious people in Catholic countries and in religiously homogenous countries (2014). In this study, all of the cases are majority Protestant and also secularized. From this literature it is possible to derive the following testable hypotheses:

> Hypothesis 1: Those who have doctrinal beliefs will be more tolerant than those who adhere to religious particularism.
> Hypothesis 2: Those who are individually spiritual will be more tolerant of immigrants than those who adhere to religious particularism.
> Age, Gender, and Education

The empirical literature suggests that the typical profile of xenophobes is older, less educated, and male. Women, some argue, are less likely to have racial prejudice than their male counterparts (Ekici and Yucel 2014; Strabac and Listhaug 2008; Lewin-Epstein and Levanon 2005). Mudde argues that this is because, whether by biology or structural placement in the economy, women more often hold nurturance roles (2007). Age also seems to play a role in prejudice or xenophobic attitudes. Researchers argue that the younger generations tend to be more educated and more open-minded than the older generation (Roemer and Van der Straeten 2004; Knudsen 1997; Ekici and Yucel 2014). Hence, older people would be expected to be more xenophobic and less tolerant of difference in general. This, however, cuts against the empirical reality that the support base of most RRPs tends to be young. Part of the explanation may lie in education and occupational sector. Individuals with higher levels of skill are more likely to be pro-immigration in high per capita gross domestic product (GDP) countries, while lower level skilled workers will be more likely to have anti-immigrant xenophobic attitudes (Yakusko 2009; O'Rourke 2004; Mayda 2004). The Nordic countries all have high GDP per capita, so it should follow that high skilled workers within those countries will be more tolerant. Education levels have also been linked to the idea that higher skilled workers will have had more education and, therefore, will be more tolerant than those will a lower education (Mayda 2004; Bohman 2011; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2009; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; Kunovich, 2004).

Hypothesis 3: Women will be slightly less xenophobic than men.
Hypothesis 4: Young people will be slightly more tolerant of immigrants than the older generation.
Hypothesis 5: More highly educated people will be less likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia.

Sense of Threat

According to both group threat theory and group conflict theory, when two groups compete for limited resources or the same goal, frustrations arise and exacerbate conflict, prejudice, and discrimination. When groups are, or perceive themselves to be, in conflict with other groups for valued resources such as money or power, intergroup tensions and prejudice may surface (Ekici and Yucel 2014, Weldon 2006). Specifically, unemployed individuals appear to have significantly higher anti-immigrant prejudice; and those with

less wealth are more likely to express racial prejudice (Strabac and Listhaug 2008; Ekici and Yucel 2014). Group threat theory, in turn, differentiates between two different kinds of perceived threat, specifically "realistic" and "symbolic" (Weldon 2006; Schlueter et al. 2008; Tolsma et al. 2008; Savelkoul et al. 2011; Hooghe et al. 2013; Ekici and Yucel 2014). Limited jobs and other valued resources in the economy are examples of realistic threats. Symbolic perceived threat, on the other hand, involves the idea that the outgroup might disrupt the cultural and religious values of the majority group.

Much of the literature argues that those with lower socioeconomic status will have stronger anti-immigrant xenophobic attitudes than those with higher socioeconomic status (Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Svallfors 2006; Weldon 2006; Ekici and Yucel 2014). Other research claims that during a slow economy natives may be more liable to scapegoat immigrants and ethnic minorities. The state of the economy as a whole may influence citizens' attitudes more than their own personal situations. Consequently, tolerance should rise in prosperous times and decline when the economy is in recession (Weldon 2006). Economic instability has been shown to activate xenophobic attitudes, especially when there is a perceived threat that foreigners are taking away jobs from native workers (Yakushko 2009; Watts 1996; Radkiewicz 2003). It stands to reason that individuals within these countries that are experiencing unemployment or economic instability will be more xenophobic because these individuals will feel more threatened, perceiving foreigners to be a new competition for economic resources. Therefore, when unemployment rates increase, intolerance towards immigrants may also increase. The threat literature also notes that individual-level xenophobia may be stimulated as much or more by a sense of cultural threat than by the fear of job loss. This aspect of perceived threat can be manifested through an individual's attitudes and ideology, forming a third broad approach to explaining anti-immigrant xenophobia. From this it is possible to derive the following:

> Hypothesis 6: Less affluent individuals will be more likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia.
> Hypothesis 7: Those who are experiencing unemployment will be more likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia.

Nationalism

It stands to reason that individuals who feel a strong sense of national pride will feel threatened by and hostile to out-group members. Research has argued that individual and group national identity focus results in stronger negative views of foreigners. The research also argues that nationalism, or belief in the superiority of one's nation over others, affects xenophobia (Esses, Dovidio, Semenya, and Jackson 2005; Yagushko 2009). There is a particular form of nationalism, at the ideological core of nativism, one in which foreign influences are viewed as suspicious and are seen to harbor the possibility of a dangerous attack from within (Ward 2014). O'Rourke (2004) argues that anti-immigrant preferences are partially caused by strong feelings of national identity, coupled with an associated set of patriotic and nationalist attitudes, including pride in country and sense of national superiority. The following hypotheses can be derived:

> Hypothesis 8: Those that feel a strong sense of nationalism will be more xenophobic than those with less expressed national pride.

Satisfaction

According to Weldon (2006) satisfaction with democracy is one of the three key variables shown to predict tolerance. Citizens who feel dissatisfied with the democratic functioning in their country have been shown to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobic attitudes (Knigge 1998; Kestila 2006; Dowley and Silve 2007). The status of immigrants as "foreigners" makes them easy targets for many who feel frustrated with the democratic process.

Weldon (2006) also identifies another type of satisfaction that has been shown to be an indicator for anti-immigrant attitudes. This research argues that strong in-group identities, low self-esteem, and perceptions of threat play a significant role in tolerance judgments. Studies have shown that those who feel unhappy with their own lives, along with other factors, will be more xenophobic than those who are happy or content. Those who were unhappy with their own lives tended to see immigrants as not only a threat to their country and economic status, but also to their personal happiness and well-being (Holman 1994, Weldon 2006, Hjerm and Nagayoshi 2011). Hence:

> Hypothesis 9: Satisfaction with and trust in government will reduce anti-immigrant xenophobia.
> Hypothesis 10: Those who identify as satisfied with their lives will be less likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia.

Ideology and Political Interest

Political interest and ideological position are two individual attributes of interest. The degree of political interest might influence the effects of political articulation because less politically interested individuals pay less attention, therefore they might attach less meaning to what is said by politicians. Politically aware individuals, on the other hand, may be more inclined to absorb certain messages if promoted by political elites that have their attention and values (Zaller, 1992, Bohman 2011). The reverse effect could also be possible. Limited interest in political positions may reinforce such effects, instead of reducing them. However, research has shown that right-leaning individuals are generally more likely to hold negative attitudes towards minorities than individuals on the left (Gorodzeisky, 2011; McLaren, 2003; Semyonov et al., 2008; Bohman 2011). From this literature it is possible to derive the following hypotheses:

> Hypothesis 11: Those that are right-leaning ideologically will be more likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia than those that lean to the left.
> Hypothesis 12: Those who are more politically aware will be more tolerant towards immigrants.

Table 1: *Hypotheses*

Social Group Characteristics
Hypothesis 1: Those who have doctrinal beliefs will be more tolerant than those who adhere to religious particularism.
Hypothesis 2: Those who are individually spiritual will be more tolerant of immigrants than those who adhere to religious particularism.
Hypothesis 3: Women will be slightly less xenophobic than men.
Hypothesis 4: Young people will be slightly more tolerant of immigrants than the older generation.
Hypothesis 5: More highly educated people will be less likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia.
Sense of Economic Threat
Hypothesis 6: Less affluent individuals will be more likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia.
Hypothesis 7: Those who are experiencing unemployment will be more likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia.
Sense of Cultural or Lifestyle Threat
Hypothesis 8: Those that feel a strong sense of nationalism will be more xenophobic than those with less expressed national pride.
Hypothesis 9: Satisfaction with and trust in government will reduce anti-immigrant xenophobia.
Hypothesis 10: Those who identify as satisfied with their lives will be less likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia.
Hypothesis 11: Those that are right-leaning ideologically will be more likely to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia than those that lean to the left.
Hypothesis 12: Those who are more politically aware will be more tolerant towards immigrants.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The current study marshals survey data from the 2008 European Values Survey (EVS) in order to test hypotheses derived from three competing approaches to explaining intolerance toward minorities (defined as immigrants). By analyzing individual responses among only the Nordic countries, it is possible to control for broad cultural and developmental similarities, such as, purchasing power parity (PPP)/per capita, human development, gender empowerment, strong left wing parties, and shared cultural history. This makes it possible to control for some of those broad country-level features and hone in on the individual level factors that cause individuals to differ in their attitudes toward immigrant outsiders. Nordic xenophobes are not intolerant because they come from a poor or economically unstable country or a Catholic-conservative cultural environment. Other factors must account for variations between xenophobes and non-xenophobes and in the level of xenophobia across countries within the Nordic bloc.

Graph 1 shows the variation between countries. Those that were scored as a (3) or (4) on the intolerance scale were grouped together as those who answered enough questions to be considered xenophobic towards immigrants. From this graph, Norway and Sweden stand out. Norway has the highest percentage of those who exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobia with fifty-nine percent of those surveyed in Norway scoring as a (3) or (4) on the intolerance scale. Sweden, on the other hand, only has around 40 percent of those surveyed answering questions in an anti-immigrant xenophobic attitude. That is nearly a 20-point difference. This could mean that there are some country-specific variables that this study has not picked up on. There might have been something specific, culturally or politically, happening in 2007 in either of these countries that caused this difference. The rise of RRPs at different times in these countries could also contribute.

The 2008 EVS dataset includes all necessary individual level information to code for anti-immigrant xenophobia, as well as all of the independent variables identified in the literature review. The dependent variable, anti-immigrant xenophobia, involves a composite scale created from 13 separate question items that dealt with intolerance towards. The EVS asked, for example, whether respondents feel that immigrants are a strain on the country, if immigrants make crime problems worse, and if immigrants are a threat to the country immigrants (See Appendix for full list of questions). Respondents

were also asked if they would not want any group of people as neighbors. This question included Muslims and immigrants among the choices. In all thirteen questions those who gave an intolerant answer were coded as (1), while all other responses were coded as (0), to create a 13-point summative scale. That scale was later collapsed into 1-4 scale running from least-to-most intolerant.

For the satisfaction with government variable an index was created using three 2008 EVS questions. These questions asked individuals how confident they were with their government, how satisfied they are with democracy in their country and how they believe things are going with their government. Those that answered positively were coded as (1) and those who answered negatively were coded as (0). Similarly, in order to measure the "satisfaction with self" variable two EVS questions were summed. One question asked how satisfied respondents are with their lives in general. Respondents that answered they were satisfied were coded as (1) and those who were not satisfied were coded as (0). The second question asked respondents how happy they are. Those that answered very happy or quite happy were coded as (1) and those that answered not very happy or not happy at all were coded as (0).

The ideology variable also reflects a summative scale based on three EVS questions. The first question asked the respondents to place their political views on a left/right scale from 1-10, 1 being left and 10 being right. Those that answered between 1 and 3 were coded as (0), while those that answered between 4 and 6 were coded as (1). Those that answered 7 or 8 were coded as (2) and those who answered 9 or 10 were coded as (3). The second and third questions were handled in the same manner. Respondents were asked if they would vote in an election. If they answered yes they were then asked in a separate what party they would vote for and if they answered no then they were asked what party most appeals to them. EVS then placed their answer on a left/right scale based on what party they chose. The responses were then coded the same way as the first question.

For political interest three EVS questions were summed. The first question asked respondents if they volunteered for any political organizations or parties. Those that answered yes were coded as (1), while all others were coded as (0). The second question asked if respondents they would vote if there was an election tomorrow. Those that

answered yes were coded as (1) and those who said no were coded as (0). The third question asked how interested the respondent was in politics. If the respondent answered "very interested" the response was coded as (2) and those that answered somewhat interested were coded as (1). Those who answered not very or not at all interested were coded as (0).

For religiosity, a scale was created using five EVS questions. These questions asked respondents how often they attend church, how often they pray, if they believe in heaven, and if they consider themselves religious. For church attendance and prayer frequency, those that said they attended church more than once a week or prayed everyday or more than once a week were coded as (2) and those that said they attended church or prayed once a week were coded as (1). All others were coded as (0). For the other questions, those that answered that they considered themselves as religious were coded as (1) and those that said they believed in heaven were also coded as (1). All other answered were coded as (0). In order to only capture Christian religiosity, responses were selected only if the respondent self-identified as Protestant, Catholic or free church/non-conformist/evangelical. Following previous literature, variables were created for those who identify as individually spiritual and those that exhibit religious particularism (or the idea that there is one true religion). Those that answered that they believed there was some sort of spirit or life force, but not a personal God were coded as (1) and all others were coded as (0). Those that answered that they believed there was only one true religion were coded as (2) and those who believed there was only one true religion, but that other religions do contain some basic truths were coded as (1). All others were coded as (0).

Gender was recoded to reflect the category expected to exhibit anti-immigrant xenophobic attitudes (male=1 and female=0). Age was treated the same way with those who were aged 15-24 as (1), 25-34 as (2), 35-44 as (3), 45-54 as (4) and 55 or older as (5). Education responses were given according to the highest level of education completed and were recoded by EVS as low (1), middle (2) and high (3). Those who are employed were coded as (1) and those who are unemployed were coded as (0). Nationalism was measured by how proud the respondent was to be a citizen of his or her country. Those who were very proud were coded as (2) and those who were quite proud

were coded as (1). All other answers were coded as (0). Wealth was coded based on the monthly income in Euros. The monthly income was used because Sweden was one of the few countries to not be given the yearly income question. The variable was recoded so that those who made 999 Euros a month of under were coded as (1). Those who made 1,000 Euros to 4,999 Euros a month were coded as (2) and those who made 5,000 Euros or more were coded as (3). Appendix 1 contains all EVS questions used.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The following analysis begins with bivariate correlations in order to offer an initial test of the hypotheses. A linear regression model is then used to more directly test the strongest variables from each school of thought against one another.

Bivariate Results

Bivariate correlations shown in Table 2 support the hypotheses presented for the social group characteristics variables and confirm much of the prior literature. Aside from Christian religiosity, all of the variables are significant. Religious particularism and individual spirituality are both significant and support the first and second hypotheses. Those who believe that there is only one true religion are more likely to be intolerant towards immigrants, while those who recognize that there is some sort of spirit or life force are less likely to be xenophobic. The most significant and robust variable among the three religion variables is religious particularism, which may point to a shift towards anti-Muslim sentiments and zero-sum cultural rhetoric.

Age, gender and education correlate with intolerance as predicted. Gender and education are statistically significant and negatively correlated with intolerance towards immigrants. Age has a statistically significant positive correlation with intolerance towards immigrants. Therefore, those with higher education will be less likely to be intolerant towards immigrants. Males and the older generations are slightly more likely to be intolerant towards immigrants.

Table 2: *Correlation Matrix of Variables (Social Group Characteristics)*

Independent Variable (Intolerance)	
Education	-.179**
Gender	-.086**
Age	.030*
Christian Religiosity	.017
Religious Particularism	.106**
Individually Spiritual	-.056**

* - Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).
** - Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The hypotheses presented for economic sense of threat (shown in Table 3) predict that those who are employed, as well as those with high income will be less likely to be intolerant towards immigrants. There is a significant negative correlation between employment and intolerance, as well as income and intolerance. This provides support for the sense of threat theory, and economic threat in particular.

Table 3: *Correlation Matrix of Variables (Sense of Economic Threat)*

Independent Variable (Intolerance)	
Employment	-.081**
Income in Euros	-.063**

* - Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).
** - Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

However, these two variables are not as robust or significant as the variables associated with the sense of cultural or lifestyle threat (shown in Table 4). Some of these cultural threat variables are the most statistically significant out of all the variables. Hypothesis eight predicts that those who describe themselves as nationalist are more likely to show intolerance towards immigrants. Bivariate correlations bear this out. Hypotheses nine and ten predict that satisfaction with government and satisfaction with self will both negatively correlate with intolerance. This is also supported at a statistically

significant level. However, government satisfaction is more significant than self satisfaction. Political interest is also one of the most significant variables. It shows a negative correlation with intolerance towards immigrants. This is interesting because there has been debate in the literature about whether political interest will increase or decrease one's intolerance. This finding might be different if the countries studied were more diverse, with a more right-wing centered state. Ideology was the strongest correlation found. As predicted, there is a positive correlation between right-wing ideology and intolerance towards immigrants. The strongest variables from each school of thought can be seen in their own bivariate table (Table 5).

Table 4: *Correlation Matrix of Variables (Sense of Cultural or Lifestyle Threat)*

Independent Variable (Intolerance)	
Ideology	.201**
Political Interest	-.138**
Nationalism	.198**
Government Satisfaction	-.106**
Self Satisfaction	-.067**

*- Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).
** - Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 5: *Correlation Matrix of Variables (Strongest Variables by School)*

Independent Variable (Intolerance)	
Education	-.179**
Religious Particularism	.106**
Employment	-.081**
Income in Euros	-.063**
Ideology	.201**
Political Interest	-.138**
National Pride	.198**

* - Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).
** - Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Multivariate Results

Results of an OLS regression model are presented in Table 6. The strongest independent variables for each of the three schools were selected from the bivariate correlation results: social group characteristics (religious particularism and education), sense of economic threat (income and employment), and political ideology and attitudes (ideology, nationalism and political interest). As can be seen in the table, all seven variables remain statistically significant. However, the economic threat indicators appear weakest and least significant, when other factors are held constant. This stands in contrast to the more robust and significant indicators of ideology, nationalism, and political interest, suggesting that in the Nordic countries the perception of immigrants as economic threat has shifted to a perception of immigrants as a cultural threat. This is in keeping with the growing perception of cultural threat from Muslims, so that Islamophobia may now be the dominant form of anti-minority sentiment in Europe. Michelle Hale Williams argues that RRP rhetoric and xenophobia has shifted from a fear of immigrants as an economic threat to the fear of Muslim immigrants as a cultural threat (2007). This shift is consistent with the findings in this study. The relatively modest model R^2 (.138) suggests that there is much variance yet to be explained in anti-immigrant intolerance among Nordic publics. Future research could examine this aspect more clearly, by using specifically anti-Muslim xenophobia, instead of anti-immigrant xenophobia.

Table 6: *Multivariate Model*

Variable	**B**	**S.E.**	**Sig.**
Religious Particularism	.172	.033	.000
Education	-.193	.017	.000
Income in Euros	-.067	.027	.015
Employment	-.076	.029	.010
Ideology	.111	.008	.000
Nationalism	.191	.018	.000
Political Interest	-.149	.014	.000
Adjusted R^2 = .138			

CONCLUSIONS

For years the Nordic countries have been seen as the "almost nearly perfect people" because of their progressive social norms, generous welfare, happy citizens and tolerance (Booth 2014). However, underneath this strong liberalism, there is a growing strain of anti-immigrant xenophobia. This can be seen in the rise of Radical Right Parties, a vicious multicultural backlash in countries with extraordinarily low crime rates, and reluctance to accept more immigrants. This study sought to understand why some citizens adopt anti-immigrant xenophobic attitudes while others, who have experienced relatively the same political context and country demographics remain more tolerant. Scholars have argued for three different explanations: social group characteristics, sense of economic threat and sense of cultural or lifestyle threat. In the past, sense of economic threat had been considered a major indicator of xenophobia. However, in this study economic threat seemed to be less of an indicator when compared with sense of cultural or lifestyle threat. In fact, sense of cultural or lifestyle threat appears to be the most significant driver of intolerance. This could be because a shift is starting to take place that is more concerned with the fear of Muslim immigrants as threats to the culture and security of a country, instead of as an economic threat. Despite which explanation is correct or the most significant, the problem remains the same: anti-immigrant xenophobia is prevalent and is affecting even the most tolerant and open-minded countries.

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Appendix I: *Intolerance by Country*